

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 SAJ-01 COME-00 AID-20 EB-11

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 3308

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ETRD HU

SUBJECT: COURTESY CALL ON APRO (PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY)

1. MY COURTESY CALL YESTERDAY ON APRO, WHO WE CHARACTERIZE AS A FORMER STALINIST AND ONE OF THE POLITBURO MEMBERS WHO BALANCES LIBERAL ELEMENTS, WAS QUITE INTERESTING BECAUSE OF DEGREE TO WHICH HE VOLUNTEERED SAME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT IMPROVING US-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS AS WE ENCOUNTER FROM OFFICIALS CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH HIM.

2. AFTER USUAL FRIENDLY PLEASANTRIES, APRO STARTED DISCUSSION WITH EXTENSIVE EXPOSITION OF HUNGARIAN VIEWS INCREASING TRADE WITH US AND ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF MFN, SIMILAR TO THOSE GIVEN TO DENT EARLIER THIS WEEK. I REPLIED ALONG SAME LINES DENT HAD USED.

3. I THEN SAID THAT WHEN WE GO TO POINT OF NEGOTIATING A TRADE AGREEMENT, AN IMPORTANT ASPECT ON OUR SIDE WOULD BE TO ENSURE THAT AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN COULD STAY AND WORK IN HUNGARY THE SAME WAY THEY DID IN OTHER FOREIGN COUNTRIES. HAVING IN MIND HIS REPUTATION, I ADDED THAT BECAUSE OF DIFFERENCES IN OUR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS SUCH COMMERCIAL ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT BE DIFFICULT,
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BUT I THOUGHT THEY COULD BE ACHIEVED.

4. APRO IMMEDIATELY SAID THAT WHILE DIFFERENCES WERE THERE, THEY WERE "EXAGGERATED". FIVE YEARS AGO SYSTEMS WERE QUITE DIFFERENT, BUT SUBSEQUENT CHANGES IN HUNGARY HAD CREATED SITUATION WHERE THE DIFFERENCES WERE NOT SO WIDE. BOTH WE AND THEY HAD MANY VOLUMES OF THEORETICAL WORKS WHICH WOULD OCCUPY ALL OUR TIME IF WE DEVOTED OURSELVES TO THEM. BUT THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO BE "PRACTICAL", AND ON PRACTICAL BASIS WE COULD WORK WELL TOGETHER. HE SAID HUNGARIAN INDUSTRIES AND TRADING COMPANIES NOW HAD SUFFICIENT INDEPENDENCE OF DECISION TO WORK WELL WITH WESTERN COMPANIES. HE FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO LOOK AT THIS NEW REALITY, NOT AT PAST SITUATIONS.

5. STRESSING UNIQUELY HIGH LEVEL OF HUNGARIAN DEPENDENCE UPON INTERNATIONAL TRADE, HE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING US-HUNGARIAN ECONOMIC CONTACTS, NOTING WE HAD MUCH THEY REQUIRED IN MANUFACTURING AND TECHNOLOGICAL AREAS AND THAT THEY HAD MANY CAPABILITIES THAT COULD BE USEFUL TO US. HE ADDED THAT HE FELT THE OLD PATTERN OF TRADE INVOLVING COMMERCIAL SALES OF GOODS WOULD GIVE WAY PROGRESSIVELY TO A NEW PATTERN WHICH WOULD INCREASINGLY INVOLVE SUCH THINGS AS MANUFACTURING VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF A PRODUCT IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES (I.E. JOINT PRODUCTION). HE OBSERVED THAT AMERICAN COMPANIES WERE ALREADY ACTIVE IN THIS ALL OVER THE WORLD AND THAT THIS PATTERN SHOULD DEVELOP WITH HUNGARY ALSO.

6. THERE WERE TWO OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST. ONE WAS THAT HE SAID WATER SUPPLY WAS A SERIOUS MATTER OF CONCERN IN HUNGARY RIGHT NOW, OBSERVING THAT HE HAD TO DEAL WITH THIS SUBJECT IN HIS OWN CONSTITUENCY NEXT WEEK. SECOND, IN RESPONSE TO MY INDICATION THAT I WOULD LIKE TO MEET MR. KOMOCSIN (CHAIRMAN OF PARLIAMENT'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND MEMBER OF THE POLITBURO) AND OTHER COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN, APRO SAID THAT KOMOCSIN IS CURRENTLY ILL AND UNAVAILABLE. (I UNDERSTAND THAT HE HAS PREVIOUSLY HAD A SERIOUS NEURALGIC ILLNESS. THIS MAY MEAN A RECRDUESCENCE.)

7. APRO WAS VERY CORDIAL AND ENTIRELY NON-IDEOLOGICAL IN
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APPROACH, ALTHOUGH HIS OFFICE, WHICH HAS A SMALL STATUE OF LENIN IN IT, IS THE ONLY ONE IN WHICH I HAVE SO FAR BEEN WHERE I NOTICED ANY COMMUNIST SYMBOLISM.
PEDERSEN

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